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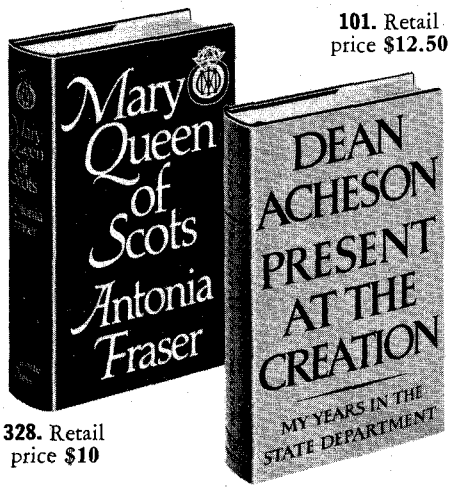

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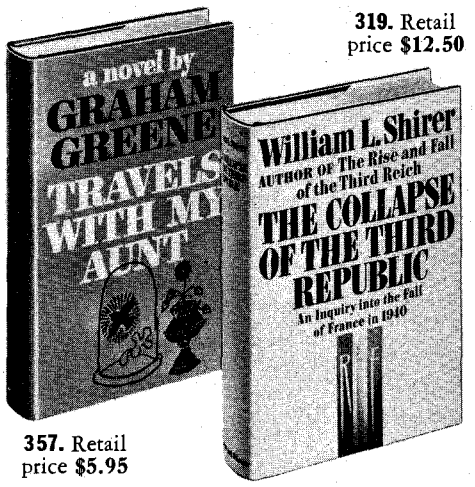
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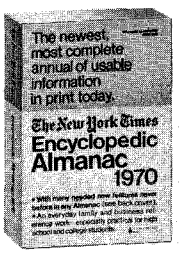

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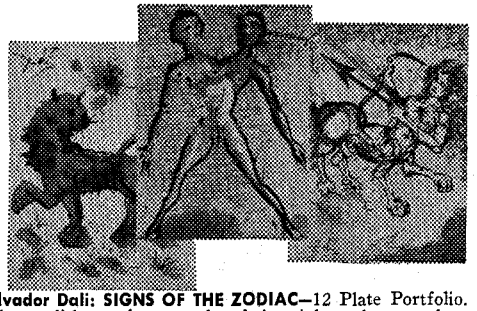

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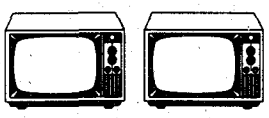

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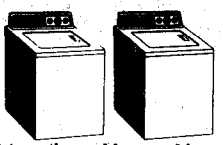

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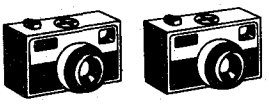

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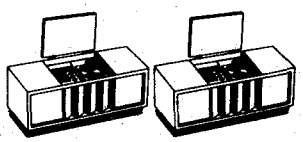

A radio-phono console priced at $379.95 . . .
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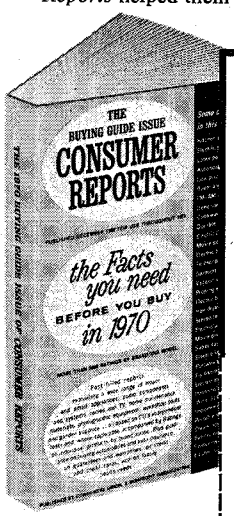

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What Fun!

Why is it that the birds always start singing just when it is time to fill out my income tax? My snowdrops are suddenly out; they always surprise me. Just the other day it was winter and we all trooped over to the colonnaded entrance of the White House to have Kissinger brief us on the State of the World. The glazed grounds looked like frosting. A crust of ice sheathing dropped from a bare elm and landed with a plop. Now it is spring and buds are bigger. The out-of-town high school buses have begun to arrive, and the pigeons are thinking of setting up home again behind the neck of one of the bronze figures on the Lafayette monument.

The monument stands in the park just across from the White House. The Mansion's official number is, of course, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Across the park diagonally is Cass Gilbert's $3-million limestone US Chamber of Commerce building. 1615 H Street has been watching 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue narrowly since Coolidge's day. It seemed a bit downcast during all that New Deal era and positively gloomy when Jack Kennedy read the riot act to US Steel. Things are better now under this new man, Nixon.

But wait a bit. There's a cloud over the spraying fountains. What is this aberration over a Family Assistance Plan? Can Mr. Nixon really mean it? Is he serious? Surely not! It's a question, indeed, that a good many people in Washington would like to have answered. The Chamber has been bottling up its irritation for months.

Then last week after a meeting of Chamber directors, Arch N. Booth, executive vice president, warned that Congress is on the verge of "taking the first step toward a guaranteed annual income from which there would be no retreat." It will add 15 million persons to welfare, and cost "an additional $5-billion a year, just as a starter." If the bill passes, said Booth, "expect an inflationary deficit or another tax increase." Or both. Congress should reject the plan, he said.

Perhaps the Chamber looked around at its fellow organizations before taking its stand. The American Medical Association is ardently against national health insurance. The American Bar Association has just refused to rescind its 21-year opposition to American ratification of the UN's convention against genocide, after Mr. Nixon asked for it with a rhetorical flourish. So why shouldn't the third member of the Standpat Three speak out in its own field? Its influence is not to be underestimated in the big struggle that now seems opening up. The Chamber has branches throughout the nation with underlying membership of more than five million.

Did Mr. Nixon know what he was getting in for when he listened to the blarney of Pat Moynihan and Bob Finch and backed the radical FAP program of an income floor under everybody (not a high floor, to be sure: $1600 for a destitute family of four, plus food stamps), and of bringing the so-called "working poor" under welfare for the first time? Like a smiling crocodile the Democratic-dominated House Ways and Means Committee, under Wilbur Mills, has decided to go along with Mr. Nixon (if that's what he wants) and to let the uneasy Republicans see how they like backing their President and bucking the local Chamber. The far right American Conservative Union calls it plain "socialism." The *Wall Street Journal* says it is "one of those perfectly fine theories absolutely doomed to be nibbled to death as it is put into practice." It's a funny situation, all right. For good reason or ill the revolutionary plan is likely to get through Congress with Democratic help – always provided Mr. Nixon really means it, and isn't bluffing. Is he? We hope not.

We mentioned above that Form 1040 always comes when the birds start singing. What fun to fill out the lines. Why, it's like a cross-word puzzle only more exciting. It's an art form and far more satisfactory than writing poetry which nobody will read; here you have the built-in satisfaction of knowing you have a careful and appreciative reader. He is the type of man who will write you an eager little note, too, with hardly any prompting.

You fall into the swing of the thing at once. There's a folksy preamble this year by Randolph W. Thrower, who turns out to be the new Commissioner of Internal Revenue. He says brightly that there "is a new, one-page Form 1040 in your tax package" which takes the place of the Card Form 1040A, and the old Form 1040. "We think it contains the best features of both," he says. How nice.

A helpful man is Mr. Thrower. He always suggests happy solutions. "If at the end of your taxable year, you were either blind or 65 or over . . ." Drat it; no such luck. Well, how about your wife . . . ? No soap there, either.

Mr. Thrower's style is a trifle elliptic. Was it real or a post-operational haze that made me think that I had found the ultimate directions: "Add RRTA tax on tip income, and subtract excess FICA, and if Lines 24 and 25 are higher than Line 16 (after subtracting overpayments credited to estimated tax) go stand on your head"? Surely a dream.

A lot of people assume that under the new "reform" tax structure most of the old loopholes are closed. Not at all. We watched Mayor Lindsay of New York last week, who was dodging Premier Pompidou in New York and had come down to testify before Sen. McGovern's committee. We were taken (as always) by the tall, personable, effective figure. Two years ago Bobby Kennedy was in turmoil over whether he would run. The mayor may be going through self-examination now as to whether he will switch. Certainly he sounds like a New Deal Democrat.

He favors a "national anti-poverty program" that would use Mr. Nixon's family assistance plan just as a takeoff runway. For one thing, he would scrap the present $600 dependent exemption in the income tax. He would substitute a universal children's allowance system, like Canada's. The $600 exemption is really a "rich man's children's allowance," he says. Where real allowances are paid abroad they have had no effect on birthrate, he says, and the money gets down to the poor. A direct allowance of $50 a month, say, would be paid per child. It would be taxable and thereby largely recovered from affluent families.

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The Clean Feeling Of Achievement

Important Democrats are worried, worried about their $9 million deficit, about having to lasso Larry O'Brien and drag him back to the National Committee, about That Man in the White House with his politics of public relations and his expertise in dividing the opposition. And liberal Democrats again wonder whether the Party *deserves* to survive. The handwringing is familiar. Writing in this journal in 1931, John Dewey confessed he could see no possibility of any "revival within the Democratic Party"; a new party had to be built. (It was, but by Franklin D. Roosevelt.) In early 1948, the lamentations were loud. Where was the leader? Could Dwight D. Eisenhower be drafted as the Democratic candidate (John Lindsay being then too young for consideration)? The ranks broke again in '68, with Eugene McCarthy leading the challenge from within, and George Wallace from without. In each instance, the cry was for a charismatic leader, a third force, or both.

It would not be accurate to say that nothing has changed. The Democratic Party, as we shall later explain, is in some ways better off than it was 22 or 2 years ago. But the nation is worse off. Bombings, beatings, occupation of buildings are rarely off the front pages. People are edgy, abusive, hysterical. ("Shoot 'em all," said one lady of riotous students in Buffalo.) The country will be very fortunate if anti-draft week, March 16-22, ends without violence. Growing numbers of the young are dropping out, freaking out on heroin, or playing at revolution – taking militant blacks as their models. Tension between black and white is up; so is unemployment; so are prices. A challenging moment, one would have said, for an opposition party. But as represented in Congress by most of their long-time dignitaries, Democrats seem unaware of any national crisis, or what to do about it. They hold to the old tradition of waiting for the Republicans to fumble, hoping to then pick up the ball and score. And this is not because the Party lacks sensible men. In the Senate, there's Fulbright, Gore, Hart, Hughes, Kennedy, McGovern, Mondale, Muskie; and within the Democratic Study Group there are several dozen Representatives of quality. But they, unfortunately, are not the men who sit in the most powerful seats, and for that the Democrats have no one to blame but themselves. They have tolerated being spoken for by "leaders" from static, one-party Southern states, or machine-

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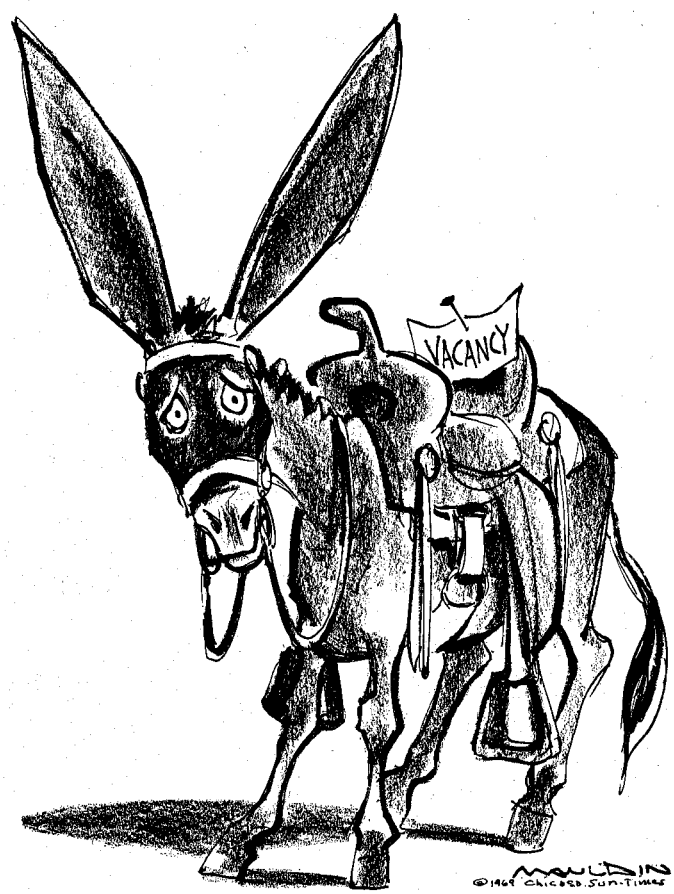
dominated big city districts. The average age of the Democratic chairmen of the important Senate committees is 67 (also the age of the Majority Leader). The comparable age in the House is 70 (Speaker McCormack is 78). As a report last week from the Democratic Study Group noted, "The seniority system produces chairmen who are generally unrepresentative of America at large and are therefore unresponsive to its needs." It's a "leadership" that offers a broken lace when what's needed is a new pair of shoes.

Senator Kennedy said the other day that if we lose our faith that this "is a nation which is trying to assure all its citizens the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . . we will have lost what no weapons and no armies can ever secure us." But Kennedy knows that that faith *has* been shattered for many Americans, and that it won't be restored by conventional politics. It can, however, be restored by the kind of "new politics" identified with the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns of '68, and which is very much alive in '70.

We've heard for years that idealistic, issue-oriented Democrats are incapable of self-discipline that results in orderly procedures and a consensus behind qualified candidates. It's too bad these skeptics weren't at the New Democratic Coalition convention in New York City February 28. Not only did nearly 400 delegates representing some 25,000 members dispense with politically inspired procedural flare-ups with a minimum of acrimony; they were able to deal with a wealth of talent available for major offices and come up with endorsements for all statewide offices by late afternoon. Each endorsed candidate is highly qualified and stands a chance, moreover, of being blessed by the Democratic State Central Committee when it meets next month. There was criticism of NDC's choice of Paul O'Dwyer for the Senate. There are a lot of people who wonder out loud if New York's Sen. Charles Goodell (R) can, or should be defeated in November. O'Dwyer lost badly in 1968, and his selection was regarded as a sentimental indulgence. The sentiment was there. When O'Dwyer, who was pressed by three attractive young congressmen (Richard Ottinger, Ben Rosenthal and Richard McCarthy), won endorsement he was mobbed by tearful, cheering delegates.



But measure that against NDC's other endorsements. Eugene Nickerson, the Nassau County executive and a man the regulars don't dislike, received 64.5 percent on the first ballot. For lieutenant governor, the reformers turned to State Sen. Basil Patterson, a Harlem man who knows street politics and is considered one of the ablest black politicians in the state. Adam Walinsky, former aide to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, won the nod for attorney general on the second ballot after some latent anti-Kennedy sentiment was quieted.

New York is one example. Another is the 3rd District of Massachusetts, a suburban area west of Boston where Rep. Phil Philbin (D), an old-style pol, is hurting. Over 800 delegates attended a 3rd District convention of the new Citizens for Participation Politics, and agreed on their candidate to oppose Philbin – the Rev. Robert F. Drinan.

More of this needs to be done. In at least two New York congressional districts (John Rooney and Leonard Farbstein) two or more qualified candidates are seeking NDC support for a primary run. If the field isn't narrowed, there is no chance of reform's winning. The same is true in Wisconsin where Don Peterson of the McCarthy campaign and Pat Lucey of the Kennedy campaign are running for governor in a field that could include Mayor Henry Maier of Milwaukee, the favorite of some labor leaders.

This is a crucial month in Connecticut where Joseph Duffey is seeking the Democratic senatorial nomination against Thomas Dodd. Town meetings at which delegates to the state convention are selected start March 17, and Duffey must get at least 20 percent of these delegates to be able to force a primary. On the same day, Alderman A. A. (Sammy) Rayner of Chicago will be battling to free Chicago's South Side from the grip of the Daley machine in a primary contest to replace Rep. William Dawson (D), who is retiring.

In California, Rep. George Brown Jr. (D), the first member of the House to vote against funding the war in Vietnam, is beginning to make headway in his campaign for the Democratic senatorial nomination. A coalition candidate in the truest sense of the word, Brown understands the issues and is attracting thousands of volunteers. His opponent is Rep. John V.

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Tunney (D), who has faithfully represented the growers in the Imperial Valley. The primary is June 3. Ex-Gov. Phil Hoff is going to oppose Sen. Winston Prouty (R) in Vermont, and two antiwar men – State Sen. Joe Josephson and Wendell Kay – are after the Democratic nomination for the seat of Sen. Ted Stevens in Alaska. Norval Reece, a veteran of reform politics, is running for the Senate in Pennsylvania.

Nor should House races be forgotten. A young (32) faculty member from the University of West Virginia, Dr. Hawley Wells, is opposing Rep. John Kee (D), an old-line political type, in West Virginia's 5th. Dr. Wells was in the "black lung" fight and befriended backers of the late Joe Yablonski. In Virginia, a 30-year-old liberal Democrat, Harold Miller, is taking on the fatuous Republican Congressman from the 10th District, Joel Broyhill. In California, another young man – Gary Hart – is calling Rep. Charles Teague's bluff on the oil slick controversy in the Santa Barbara district. Ex-State Sen. Fabian Chavez (D), another anti-Vietnam man, is running against Rep. Manuel Lujan (R) in New Mexico's 1st.

The one unfortunate development is the failure of coalition leaders to move into the urban centers of the South and Southwest with the dollars and expertise necessary to help a generation of able young activists move up a step. But it can be argued that 1972 will be a better year, since redistricting may improve the chances of such men as State Rep. Julian Bond in Atlanta, State Rep. Paul Moreno in El Paso, City Councilman Henry March in Richmond, and City Councilman Peter Torres, Jr. in San Antonio.

NDC also has a big stake in the reelection of a lot of incumbents – Senators Ralph Yarborough in Texas, where registration figures are ahead of 1968 and show gains in Mexican-American and black areas; Sen. Albert Gore in Tennessee, where his populist appeal is still strong; Sen. Frank Moss in Utah, to name just a few. And it has a stake in gubernatorial candidates with no serious primary opposition, such as John Gilligan in Ohio and Jess Unruh in California.

The dozens of people from every segment of the Party who flocked to the McGovern Commission hearings last year to detail inequities in party procedures, along with the tentative steps taken by at least 30 state parties to reform themselves even before the Commission's findings were adopted, indicate a widespread interest in a Democratic Party that is more open, more responsive to popular sentiment. On the eve of the National Committee's meeting last week well-known party workers signed a statement demanding wider consultation and open discussion in reaching a consensus on a Party chairman.

These are some of the stirrings in the underbrush. The country could go up in smoke with the revolutionaries or down the drain with the reactionaries. It could also go the way of reform, recapturing what Senator Muskie calls that "clean feeling of achievement."

The Acceptable Compromise

When the President solemnly flourished his pen before the eyes of a national TV audience and vetoed the $19.7 billion health and education bill, he set in motion a complicated congressional apparatus of gears, pulleys, and wires. After many stops and starts – and raids by segregationist nightriders, encouraged by the Administration's discreet ambivalences – the machine finally came to a halt and delivered itself of a new bill. The House accepted a Senate version that the President said he would sign. Its face value is $19.4 billion, but as a result of one Pickwickian amendment, a Senate concession to the White House, two percent of this amount will not be spent. The President thus got a compromise costing something in the neighborhood of $19-billion – $700 million less than Congress initially voted, and $760 million more than the Administration first proposed. The increases, such as they are, go for education, health care, and hospital construction programs. The Senate also eliminated one of three segregationist amendments that had been tied to the bill like tin cans on a dog's tail, and it stripped the other two of any possible meaning. (One of these would have barred HEW officials from requiring busing to achieve school integration; the other would have encouraged "freedom of choice" plans that are usually segregationist dodges to maintain dual school systems.) Although attempts to push through the amendments failed, the near success of the Southerners is seen as an omen for the future; as is the remark of the President's chief domestic adviser, John Ehrlichman: "When a change in the racial make-up of the schools is undertaken for a purely social end, that's a misuse of the schools."

A key item in the early wrangles was the amount of federal aid to "impacted" school districts within which there are federal installations of one kind or another. The President had a good point when he said that this impacted aid, although popular in Congress, is largely a bonus to the rich, just as he was right to talk about "accountability" for school programs, many of which are failing, including programs in the field of vocational training, a notorious educational rotten borough. The trouble is that nobody believes Scrooge when he talks about accountability: the President's *bona fides* in all educational matters are increasingly suspect. He has not yet suggested a single better way to spend money on the schools, which are in desperate shape. He simply wants to spend less. And it is plain that on the issue of inflation he is shadowboxing, counting on the gullibility and fiscal illiteracy of aggrieved voters. Congress fought inflation by cutting the Defense budget $5.6 billion. By putting some of the money saved into schools and other starved social programs like health care, it took the first step in leading the country toward a sane reordering of its topsy-turvy priorities.

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The Nixon Watch

A Faithful Servant

The measure of Daniel P. Moynihan's value to the President that other White House assistants favor when they discuss him nowadays is no longer, as it was for a time, that he is the senior Democrat and liberal in Mr. Nixon's service. Moynihan remains a Democrat by affiliation, but his associates have every reason to gather that he sets no great store by the "liberal" tag. His strictures upon what he calls "the liberal establishment," recognized members of it, and the "myths" to which he thinks they adhere with blind persistence, are so stringent and so frequent as to set him apart from that establishment and to identify him, in the minds and talk of his White House fellows, with those among them whose great virtue and value is that they know how to serve Richard Nixon and how, in serving him, to be effective with him. It is said of Pat Moynihan now that he is a superb bureaucrat, the perfect assistant and Counsellor (his current title), who in his 13 months at the White House has proven himself a master of the difficult art of serving a President without reducing the servant to utter servility.

It is in this light that the inquirer at the White House is encouraged to read an example of Moynihan's counsel to the President that *The New York Times* published on March 1. In a 1600-word memorandum that Moynihan typed for himself and dated January 16, he offered the President "a general assessment of the position of Negroes at the end of the first year of your Administration, and of the decade in which their position has been the central domestic political issue." On February 10 the President's staff manager, H. R. Haldeman, had copies of the hitherto private memorandum distributed to Vice President Agnew, four Cabinet members, and three White House assistants. This normally happens only when the President orders it done, and Moynihan agreed the other day that it is "a fair assumption" that the President ordered the distribution in this case. Moynihan also said that he had been expecting the memorandum to be leaked to the press ever since he learned of the distribution. He said that he thought to himself, "Oh God, this is it," when Peter Kihss of the *Times* caught him by telephone on Saturday, February 28, just as he was about to leave for a flight to Antigua (where he persuaded ex-Defense Secretary Neil McElroy, the Procter and Gamble soap chairman, to head up a new commission that will study the problems of educational finance). Kihss told Moynihan that the *Times* had the full text, and Moynihan urged him to print the whole if he printed anything.

Moynihan and others at the White House prefer to believe that the document was leaked from one of the departments whose Secretaries received it. The suspected department is Health, Education and Welfare, where Secretary Robert H. Finch permitted wide distribution to his subordinates. One of the several who received copies was Leon Panetta, director of the Office for Civil Rights, who was fired shortly afterward at Nixon's personal order. "That is completely false," Panetta says of the supposition at the White House that he did the foul deed. Photocopies were all over the place within a matter of days, and the sufficient certainty is that somebody who saw a chance to discredit Moynihan and/or the Administration's racial and civil rights policies passed the memo to the *Times*.

The publication served that purpose, but the point of lasting interest in the episode is the light the affair throws upon Nixon and the Nixon White House. Here Pat Moynihan was addressing a man, the President, with whom he had been in continuous dialogue for more than a year. One of the two central points of the memorandum – that "the American Negro is making extraordinary progress" – could not in itself have been news to Mr. Nixon, who often said as much during his 1968 campaign and has relied upon the belief that it is so during his Presidency. The statistics used to document the point were derived, accurately so far as they went, from an interim Census Bureau study that Moynihan had largely inspired. Census and Labor Department statisticians who prepared the source report quarreled seriously with only one assertion in the Moynihan document – that "outside the South, young husband-wife Negro families have 99 percent of the income of whites." Moynihan should have noted, the statisticians thought, that this was true of only 135,000 out of 1.5 million non-Southern Negro families. The professionals added with less emphasis that Moynihan might also have noted such other qualifying facts as that in a typical mid-income category (around $7000) it took three earners in a Negro family to equal the income of one earner in a comparable white family. But balance of that kind was not what Moynihan was after. Why bore and burden his President with qualifying negatives in presenting what he considered to be a useful and effective positive point, one that was bound to reassure Mr. Nixon that he was right in his present assumptions and in the course of action and non-action that the assumptions indicate?

The dynamite passage in the memo, the one that caused Moynihan to say "Oh, God" to himself when it got out, was that "The time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of 'benign neglect.' " My reading of it and of the section it introduced is exactly what Moynihan since has insisted, with extraordinary and uncharacteristic ineptness, that he intended to imply: nothing more or less than that such Administration figures as Attorney General Mitchell and Vice President Agnew should be made to stop providing "opportunities for martyrdom, heroics, histrionics or whatever" to Black Panthers, people like the defendants in the Chicago conspiracy trial, and kindred "hysterics, paranoiacs, and boodlers" on both

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sides of the explosive racial and social issues of the day. But his way of putting it in the memorandum and of justifying it later invited the distortion it received, to the effect that he was recommending "benign neglect" of the entire racial problem. On the day before the document was published, Moynihan had brought the President together in privacy, for several hours of intimate discussion of that problem among others, with a group that included Professor Charles V. Hamilton of Columbia University, a renowned black advocate of reasoned militance, David Riesman and James Wilson of Harvard, and others to whom the thought of "benign neglect" would be anathema. Moynihan at that meeting was serving his purpose, and a useful one it is, of the Presidential educator, exposing Mr. Nixon to talk and views of a kind that are new to him and could be as valuable to the country as the President is said to think they are to him.

A subsequent visitor at the White House thought that he detected a certain note of gloating over Moynihan's discomfiture among some of his associates. That is not the impression I got. I am prepared to believe, as I was told, that the episode had actually strengthened Moynihan's position with the President and with his senior staff associates. The insiders judged the incident to be an example of how outsiders misjudge insiders and fail to comprehend the intricacies of Presidential counseling and communications. The published memo, surely in any fair judgment an inferior and misleading piece of advice and information on a very serious subject, was defended at the White House (by Moynihan, among others) as a superior and representative example of the written advice that the President gets.

There is no reason to doubt that Counsellor Moynihan is riding high. The Nixon message on education is principally his creation, in somewhat uneasy collaboration with Commissioner of Education James E. Allen, Jr. Expounding on it to the press, Moynihan was at his ebullient best, making a rather thin document seem much more substantial than it probably will turn out to be. The Administration's welfare reforms, in large part Moynihan's reforms, seem to be headed toward passage in the House and eventual enactment. He is occupied with myriad other projects, ranging from the reduction of illegal heroin imports to a depth study of national economic growth and the directions it ought to take. It is accepted at the White House that Moynihan will be leaving the Nixon service at the end of this year, returning to his professorship at Harvard. But not, it is quite clear now, because of any unhappiness with the uglier aspects of the Nixon course, including the ones that he touched obliquely upon in the published memo. A necessity of the assistant's art is that nothing be allowed to distract the assistant from his particular concerns and service. Pat Moynihan is as good at that part of it as he is still thought to be at the whole art of serving a President.

John Osborne

Revolution As Theatre

by Robert Brustein

The main thing . . . is that the rebellion start off by despising make-believe. . . . If we behave like the other side, then we are on the other side. Instead of changing the world, all we'll achieve is a reflection of the one we want to destroy.

Jean Genet, *The Balcony*

America seems to be without adequate machinery for the redress of grievances and for social change: it is a measure of this failure that little more is available to those dissatisfied with inequities of the system than ineffective demonstrations against the government, threatening rhetoric, disruptive gestures, and self-conscious life-styles. Partly drained of its resources by an intolerable unending war, partly blocked from

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progress by an intransigent Administration supported by a selfish white working class, the nation lumbers along in a state of paralysis, unable to move in any direction but the unacceptable one it now pursues. At the same time that grievances accumulate and rage mounts, the government holds absolute power to suppress any insurrection – if not to destroy it from within before it has even begun through an elaborate network of informers.

Partly as a result, meaningful political action is being replaced by radical verbal displays, while revolutionary agitation has moved from the streetcorners and underground presses to the mass communications media. What a paradox! America is frequently (and with more and more cause) charged with being repressive; yet, it enjoys at present the most extraordinary freedom of expression in its history, perhaps in the history of any nation. What is more, this freedom is being used not just in an infantile way – as in the obscenities of the confrontationists – or in an experimental way – as in the current investigations into the boundaries of pornography – but also in an openly political manner.

Shaw felt compelled to suppress a play as mild as *Heartbreak House* until the conclusion of World War I for fear of arousing the authorities. Today, playwrights are more likely to shelve their works for fear of displeasing the revolutionary young. Anti-Vietnam war plays have become a cliche, and black dramatists indict white audiences weekly from the stages of Establishment theatres. I can think of no other nation in history, not even Athens during the time of Aristophanes, when criticism of a current war and of an established society has been so open and bitter as at this time, in this place.

Freedom of this kind ends no wars and fills no bellies, which is why militant blacks and radical whites seem so scornful of it. And free speech, even if it lasts, can hardly be expected to compensate for the economic and political injustices visited upon the poor by the rest of the nation. It is, in fact, of greatest benefit – in our culturally open, politically closed society – to artists and thinkers, a benefit that may show some returns when they once again begin to create and think. Still, militants and radicals have been quick to take advantage of these extended verbal freedoms, despite their expressed contempt for them – largely as a result of the new hospitality being offered to radical expression by newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and publishing houses. Given their past record of conformist thought and engineered consent (a record I observed without much hope in 1961 in "The Madison Avenue Villain"), the media have been astonishing in their new openness to a wide spectrum of political opinion. Indeed, this may be the real reason why they have been subjected to such abuse recently by the Yahoos of the Administration.

The Administration, however, need not worry, for little has come out of these appearances except entertainment. Instead of using their opportunities for the formulation of radical ideas and innovative programs, the media revolutionaries have instead been indulging in muscle-flexing and tub-thumping, proclaiming their violent plans on all the major talk shows, between the commercials and before and after the Late Show. It is odd, to say the least, to find revolutionaries broadcasting their intentions, including their intention to overthrow the system, to such a wide audience. In the past, revolutionaries have been rather less publicity-minded, choosing to remain anonymous except when they wished to win over more followers to an ideology or program. What this violent talk signifies is that American revolutionaries are impotent to act, and that they lack an ideology entirely, though they are hardly lacking in passions – thus, the weakness for rhetoric and gestures, rather than programs and organization.

The result is not revolution but rather theatre – a product of histrionic personalities and staged events – which may explain why a drama critic has the temerity to scrutinize it. When James Forman disrupts a church service to demand reparations from Episcopalians or when Sonny Carson and his followers, Mace in hand, grab the microphones at a Regional Plan Association meeting discussing New York's master plan, then we know that the incidents have been staged for the newspaper reporters and television cameras, and should, therefore, be more properly evaluated by aesthetic than by political criteria, according to the quality of the dialogue, costumes, acting, and direction. Although it may be argued that such incidents are dress rehearsals rather than actual performances (and therefore should not be prematurely judged) the truth is that many of these performances will never take place – only endless previews before a safe audience that can be counted upon to tolerate the charade, if not actually applaud it.

I do not mean to deny that some of these performers may eventually expose themselves to danger – that they may, in Genet's words, "be so carried away by their passions that they no longer recognize anything, and leap, without realizing it, into . . . reality." The Weathermen, the Young Lords, and the Black Panthers certainly have the capability to transform their rhetoric into violent action, and are now suffering the consequences in even more violent official retaliation (in the Chicago trial, the rhetoric alone resulted in terrible judicial overkill). Still, both actions and rhetoric are an extension of theatricality, and proceed through the impulse to impersonate. When the Weathermen lock arms down a Chicago street, chanting "We love our uncle, Ho Chi Minh," or when the Young Lords play at being Che Guevara and Castro, or when the Panthers,

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in paramilitary costumes, have their pictures taken giving breakfast to ghetto children, then the link with public relations and playacting becomes obvious. Indeed, the alleged murder of an alleged Panther informer in New Haven bore sufficient similarities to the plot of a recent movie (Jules Dassin's *Uptight*, a remake of *The Informer*, revolving around black revolutionaries) to make one suspect that life was imitating art.

Some newspapers concede the theatrical aspect of the revolution by publishing articles by its more celebrated figures in the amusement pages (it is noteworthy that these figures are often theatre celebrities). *The New York Times*, for example, can usually be expected to invite LeRoi Jones or Ed Bullins, or one of their followers, to do a black avenger routine every other Sunday in its drama pages – where they will dutifully froth away at the "white beasts" and declare their intention to murder and enslave them. The occasion for these fulminations is customarily the opening of a new play in some blazing revolutionary haunt like the Brooklyn Academy of Music where the playwright's work will be mechanically praised, regardless of its merit, first by a white reviewer (or by a black one, if the other offers the slightest reservation), and then by an audience composed largely of guilty white liberals – thus providing the playwright with royalties, ostensibly to purchase arms for the extermination of the society that is applauding his work.

This bewildering habit of claiming social rewards for revolutionary activity can be observed more closely in the progress of a career like James Kunen's. After participating in the occupations at Columbia in 1967 and in the bust that followed, Kunen recorded his experiences in a slim volume called *The Strawberry Statement*. There he was able to testify to his deep and abiding alienation from American life. American life responded by offering him wide praise and considerable fame, not to mention the inevitable invitations from mass magazines and TV talk shows, where he used the opportunity to bristle even more fiercely over the corruptions of the capitalistic ethic. It didn't take long before Hollywood had bought his book for an undisclosed sum, and MGM began to make a movie of it – with James Kunen playing one of the roles! Recently, Kunen pondered, in another glossy magazine, about the morality of his involvement with the film, as well as on "the irony of $1.9 million being spent to make a movie about a protest against the works of capitalism." His conclusion: that making Hollywood movies about revolution is really the same as making revolution.

Developments of this kind are inevitable in a culture where fame is replacing money as the animating drive of ambitious men and the cardinal sign of achievement ("In five years," as Andy Warhol has cogently observed, "everybody in the world will be famous for fifteen minutes"). And one of the current formulas for finding fame is theatricalized revolution – revolution for the hell of it – designed to capture attention for an individual through some extraordinary antic. This impulse may help account for the mindlessness of the movement, and may explain why radical thinkers like Christopher Lasch, Paul Goodman, Eugene Genovese, and Bayard Rustin are such isolated figures these days, and so unpopular with the revolutionary young. When performance is considered more important than the script, hard economic solutions and practical programs are abandoned for mass media confrontations which lead nowhere except to further publicity. In place of thought, we are given expletives and imprecations, used so indiscriminately that they have lost their meaning even for those who employ them. And what may have been originally stimulated by a desire to dramatize a cause for the sake of curing an injustice now often seems like theatre for its own sake, destructive in its aim, negative in its effect, performed with no particular end in mind.

The compulsion to act out revolutionary moral concerns is hardly confined these days to militants and radicals: it is shared by successful, wealthy liberals as well. The age has spawned a new hybrid: the cocktail party revolutionary. Trailing excitement through the corridors of universities, museums, courtrooms, and publishing houses, always certain (in Saul Bellow's words) to enact his "revolutionary passions against a background of institutional safety," he dreams fantasies of violence within a context of hedonism, usually stopping short of physical danger or property loss. In Pancho Villa moustaches and granny glasses, long hair flowing over his maxicoat, the cocktail party revolutionary works feverishly to establish his alliance, through speech, clothes and style, with the radical theatrics of the day. Nothing testifies more to the fashionableness of the movement than his involvement with it, for he is the style-spotter and trend-setter of the time.

Thus, we find New York hostesses transferring their charitable impulses from the Junior League and the hospital fund to the Black Panthers and other radical groups—raising money, over cocktails and canapes, to help such movements achieve their objectives. (Obviously, I am not criticizing the sincere efforts of serious civil liberties groups to protect the physical

COMING:
Alexander M. Bickel
replies to critical comments on
his article: Desegregation,
Where Do We Go from Here?

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safety and civil rights of radicals threatened with police violence and legal harassment.) There is something profoundly disturbing about the moral spectacle of these affairs, when guests file past private guards or through these intricate safety systems that have become so common in Manhattan today to be exhorted by those whose announced aims include the abolition of private property and the extermination of the pigs. It would be interesting to know how quickly the police would be called were one of these Panthers to enter a townhouse without an invitation to address the assembled guests.

Thus, we find the sons and daughters of the wealthy contributing portions of their inherited patrimony – not to aid the poor and oppressed, but to underwrite the bail of men and women accused of bombing government buildings (one wonders if this generosity was inspired by a presumption of innocence – or of guilt). Thus, we are treated to a television special starring Simon and Garfunkel, organized less around their music than around their feelings about the state of society – describing their alienation to hordes of swooning admirers, and singing their urban folk songs to the accompaniment of film clips showing war, poverty and protest marches. What portion of their royalties, one wonders, has gone to Resist and the Urban Coalition? Thus, we come upon a Broadway production of *Indians* which invites the audience, at $10 a throw, to feel indignation over the exploitation of the American redman, while exploiting the Indian almost as ruthlessly for the sake of the theatrical spectacle. What percentage of the gross was intended for the Sioux?

Moral posturing of this kind, unaccompanied as it is by risk or difficulty, is a sure sign of sentimentality – and nowhere is the sentimentalist more conspicuous these days than in the university. There students protest bourgeois materialism by consciously adopting the life styles of the underclasses, while at the same time expending enormous sums on electronic equipment, records, rock concerts, costumes, and drugs. The more radical students identify themselves with dining hall workers, protesting their long hours and low pay, while continuing to eat and live in college comfort without lifting a finger to help them with the trays. Others express their fury over the brutalities of the ROTC program by swarming over university buildings and holding officials prisoner, if not by throwing firebombs through the windows of ROTC offices – in the early hours, to be sure, when nobody but the night watchman is liable to be killed. Still others communicate their sense of bondage through countless "liberation fronts," representing such oppressed as undergraduates, postgraduates, women, and dormitory residents (how hard it is for the young to express themselves without forming into movements or groups). It is the age of the seething grievance, when everyone is joining an undifferentiated chorus of complaint on so many subjects that one is hard put to separate out the real from the phony issues.

And then there is rock music – the perfect emblem of revolutionary theatre: turbulent, deafening, convulsive, stoned, communal, both popular and special, at the same time electronic and anti-technological, endlessly affluent and endlessly alienated. From the photos of the innumerable groups that glower hairily from record covers, you would never guess how fabulously profitable the rock business has become or how vast is its potential for exploiting simulated poverty and rural affectation. Rightly praised at first for its accomplishments as a strong popular expression, and then elevated (with the help of intellectual critics) into the ranks of an "artform," if not a form of religious salvation, rock music has been suffering from self-importance ever since. Lately, it also has been suffering from an increasing brutalization. One thinks of the Rolling Stones being protected from overzealous admirers by a bodyguard of knife-wielding Hell's Angels; or of Jimi Hendrix, pulverizing his guitar in a frenzy of musical emotion (an endless supply of instruments, naturally, awaits him in the wings); or of a Michigan group called the Up whose members carry rifles and place bayonets on their guitars. Much of rock music, in short, is carried along on waves of violence, and it inspires violent dreams in its listeners. As one rock critic recently phrased it, after half seriously suggesting that a rock opera called *Tommy* should be performed at the Metropolitan Opera House: "The evening's proceeds would be donated to purchase bombs for needy high school students. After all, Verdi's *Ernani* sparked a revolution in Italy – why shouldn't *Tommy* trigger the first gun of the American revolution from that citadel of uptightness, the Met?"

Clearly, we are suffering from a serious dissociation between our language and its implications: it is as if nobody hears what he is saying any more. One's impulse is to dissolve in pure disgust, but Timon's way leads nowhere either. What to do? Stranded between two ignorant armies, each dedicated to obliterating the other, each identifying everyone else as the enemy, how does one defend the integrity of the truth and the foundation of humane values? We can make a small beginning, I think, by conceding that *revolution* in America is a stage idea, and turning away from these playactors of the ideal. This means writing off the radical extremes of the current younger generation, and trying to cultivate the genuine warmth and decency that this generation still retains. For the extremists have failed us badly. We had looked for intelligence as well as passion, programs as well as postures, kindness as well as zeal, and what we got was make believe, ambition, fashion, self-indulgence, and incredible self-righteousness. We discovered that idealistic Americans were also violent Americans, and that for all the

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moral superiority of the revolutionaries to the Establishment, they were creating a mirror image of the society they wished to overthrow. The only revolution barely possible under present circumstances is a revolution of the spirit and this can be initiated only through an act of moral transcending, humane intelligence, and deliberate will. It is a small enough hope, but without it, I am afraid, we will remain lost in the mirror, frozen on the stage, forever blocked off from the reality of meaningful change.

Standing History on Its Head

LBJ's Account of March, 1968

by Townsend Hoopes

While much of what Lyndon Johnson said in his February 6 interview with CBS doubtless reflected a genuine *post facto* belief, the performance was something more than honest error engendered by a natural compulsion to be vindicated. There ran, like a red thread, through the often confused and occasionally incoherent explanations the LBJ trademark of calculated imprecision – a shrewd, deliberate, and skillful glossing over of awkward truths. The master of the political carom seemed intent upon executing a series of trick shots designed to (a) discredit the idea that a basic struggle over Vietnam policy occurred within his Administration during March 1968, (b) demonstrate that he and his Secretary of State were the only true initiators of constructive proposals for putting a ceiling on the war, and (c) relegate Clark Clifford to a minor role and undermine his credibility.

The principal theme was that Secretary Rusk proposed to him, on or about March 4, an unconditional, partial bombing halt; the vital corollary, which Mr. Johnson kept implicit, is that he accepted the proposal then and there, and built steadily upon it in developing what became his watershed decisions of March 31. He made no attempt in the interview to reconcile this theme with the contrary evidence that his acceptance of the necessity to curtail the bombing, reject the large military troop request, and impose limits on a previously open-ended war effort came very much later in the month – and then only after the weight of private advice and public pressure had become at least temporarily irresistible. One hopes, without much conviction, that Mr. Johnson's forthcoming book will disclose the Rusk proposal verbatim and in context, will make clear the President's reaction, and will relate it to his words and actions during the balance of the month.

It appears technically accurate to say that Secretary Rusk did propose an unconditional, partial bombing halt in early March. But those few who recall having seen it paid it small attention at the time, for they read it as a gesture, a short-term pause designed to alleviate heavy political pressures at home and abroad, but holding out no serious hope that Hanoi would respond by agreeing to negotiations. Public opinion was restive; March 12 was the New Hampshire primary, and a number of Democratic regulars were desperately seeking something to neutralize Senator McCarthy's rising antiwar appeal. The proposal was timed to be militarily painless, for the drenching winter monsoon then enshrouded the whole of coastal Vietnam, confining bombing operations to a few days each month and adversely affecting the accuracy of the sorties that were flown. Mr. Johnson made this almost explicit in responding to one of Walter Cronkite's questions: "I think that the Secretary felt that . . . in the light of the weather conditions that prevailed, and in the light of our military situation in Vietnam at the time, that this was a propitious time that we could take this action with a minimum of danger." At the end of a decent interval and no hopeful sign from Hanoi, Washington could resume the bombing, having demonstrated its own goodwill and the faithlessness of the other side.

A Rusk proposal of that type and purpose immediately clears up the supposed inconsistency of his statement to the Foreign Relations Committee a week later (March 11) when he expressed the view that Hanoi "would not accept a partial cessation of the bombing as a step toward peace in any way, shape or form." Indeed it confirms the basic position the Secretary had held with passion, eloquence and unwavering tenacity during the entire preceding three years – namely, that there should be no extended or permanent bombing halt without clearcut reciprocity. A year before, in

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February 1967, Secretary Rusk and Walt Rostow had torpedoed a delicate (many thought promising) effort by Prime Minister Wilson to enlist Kosygin's help in bringing about a mutual reduction of the ground fighting in conjunction with a US bombing halt. Rusk's statement, dismissing Kosygin's proffered assistance, called it part of "a systematic campaign by the Communist side" to bring about a bombing halt without even "elementary reciprocity." He had similarly mistrusted the "San Antonio formula," invented by Assistant Secretary of Defense Warnke and sold to the President by Secretary McNamara for inclusion in a September 1967 speech. That proposal asserted a US willingness to stop the bombing "when this would lead promptly to productive discussion"; it imposed no other conditions, saying merely the US would "assume" that, while the discussions proceed, the other side "would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation." Foreign Minister Trinh of North Vietnam had stated publicly in early 1967 that a US bombing halt "could" bring about negotiations. Ten months later, on December 31, he made a similar statement, but changed the "could" to "would," thereby meeting the requirements of the San Antonio formula. Rusk promptly dispatched William Bundy to make clear to reporters that the State Department would not take yes for an answer.

So the Secretary of State's position was well known and wholly consistent. A dramatic reversal in March would have greatly surprised his colleagues; there is no evidence that any eyebrows were raised. It is true that he regarded private advice to the President as the first duty of his office. Yet if his bombing halt proposal had been serious, and if the President had promptly accepted it, one wonders why it was never introduced into the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Vietnam, a group established by the President on February 28 for the purpose of considering the Wheeler-Westmoreland troop request and its relation to other aspects of Vietnam policy; why it was not reflected in the March 7 recommendations of that group, although Rusk attended the first meeting and was thereafter represented by Nicholas Katzenbach and William Bundy; indeed, why the Task Force, while reaffirming the San Antonio formula, called for an immediate step-up in the bombing.

In judging these questions, one needs to recall the prevailing atmosphere of Washington in late February and early March of '68. It was a mood compounded of concern and wariness. General Wheeler's report had shown that, while US and ARVN forces had withstood the Tet whirlwind and were beginning to recover, they remained everywhere on the defensive, awaiting fresh attacks now acknowledged to be quite within the enemy's capability. A heavy threat hung over Northern I Corps; six enemy regiments clung tenaciously to the outskirts of Saigon; the fall of Khesanh was a brooding possibility. Planners and policymakers (hawks, moderates, and doves together) were thinking first of how to guard against another sandbagging. Some of course sniffed victory in the ashes and pressed for troop reinforcements; in fact, the initial Clifford-Nitze-Warnke counter-effort was almost wholly taken up with containing the pressures for a go-ahead on 206,000 more troops, while simultaneously trying to widen the context of the debate. No one was yet putting forth serious bombing halt proposals. They were to come later in the month with the general improvement of the military situation in Vietnam and the progressive delineation of policy alternatives in Washington. Therefore, the idea that Secretary Rusk, of all people, would propose and the President would accept a serious move toward unilateral de-escalation in the Washington atmosphere of early March works hard against the grain of the mind.

On March 22, the inner circle of advisers met with the President to discuss a speech draft which, on the bombing issue, rejected any consideration of a halt without reciprocity. It is the clearest recollection of several participants that it was Clifford, not Rusk, who expressed dismay at this aspect of the draft, and who argued for a partial bombing halt without conditions. At the end of the meeting it was Rusk who summarized the widely felt dilemma: namely, that a partial bombing halt would not buy negotiations, while a total halt might jeopardize US forces in I Corps. Even on March 28, just three days before the President's speech, Clifford and Rusk sat down to "polish" a later draft that was entirely silent on the question of a bombing halt. That omission, as well as the document's generally defiant and bellicose tone, caused Clifford to label it a "disaster" and to spend the next five hours in urgent advocacy of a far more constructive, more conciliatory speech. Are we to suppose that Rusk's initial silence, and then his gradual agreement to the preparation of an alternative draft – to give the President the benefit of a clear choice – was all elaborate stage play, concealing a pact to stop the bombing already concluded between himself and the President? The moral difficulty is apparent. To believe Lyndon Johnson on this crucial point, one must unavoidably accept Rusk as a thoroughgoing dissembler in relations with his cabinet colleagues. To those who know Rusk's dogged integrity, such a view of him is not credible.

The root question thus relates not to Rusk's proposal, but to whether Lyndon Johnson endorsed it on receipt. There is of course abundant evidence that he remained actively hostile to any kind of bombing halt until very late in the month. In mid-February, his Special Counsel, Harry McPherson, had urged a halt on the grounds of practical domestic politics. The next day McPherson heard from Rostow that the President had no intention of stopping the bombing; moreover, that Rostow had been instructed to enlist McPherson's

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assistance in developing new arguments for its public support. Ambassador Goldberg proposed a total halt on March 15 in a long, private memorandum. The following day the President, waving the Goldberg proposal before him, referred to it in derisive terms; he then scathingly informed his assembled advisers that he was not interested in further discussion of the bombing, that he had heard all the arguments, that he was not going to stop it. The next day he flew off to the Middle West to deliver a pair of unusually truculent speeches, urging his audience "to join us in a total national effort to win the war. . . . Make no mistake about it – I don't want a man in here to go back thinking otherwise – we are going to win." Clifford, who at that time was meeting with Rusk and the President nearly every day, virtually concluded that "the game was lost." Had the President already accepted the idea of a serious unconditional bombing halt? If so, then why did he later regard its espousal by a majority of the Senior Advisory Group – especially McGeorge Bundy, Acheson, Vance, Dillon and Ridgeway – as a defection? Why did he insist on interrogating the men who had briefed the Senior Advisors, demanding to know what they had said to produce such apparently unaccountable shifts of position?

The second major theme of the interview was Mr. Johnson's elaborate insistence that as President he had not convened the Ad Hoc Task Force on Vietnam merely, or even primarily, to implement the Wheeler-Westmoreland troop request; that, on the contrary, he had instructed its members in writing to provide him with "recommendations" based on a wide examination of alternative policies. In the July 1969 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Clark Clifford wrote: "I was directed, as my first assignment, to chair a task force named by the President to determine how this new requirement [the military request for 206,000 additional troops] could be met. We were not instructed to assess the need for substantial increases in men and materiel; we were to devise the means by which they could be provided."

In the interview with Walter Cronkite, Mr. Johnson called this version "totally inaccurate," and proceeded to read somewhat confusingly from what purported to be a directive addressed to Rusk, Clifford and other principal members of the Task Force on February 28. The document, if authentic, would demonstrate that the President had asked for a searching reappraisal of Vietnam policy, and was not virtually committed *a priori* to a further buildup of ground forces. The Pentagon officials concerned are quite clear that they never received such a document. About February 29, Warnke's office did receive a short memorandum from William Bundy citing (but not enclosing) the directive and pointing out the immediate need for coordinated staff work to answer the questions it posed. Warnke's office called Clifford's office to obtain a copy of the directive. Nothing was known of it there. Clifford's executive officer, Colonel Pursley, then called the White House to ascertain the status of the document and when the Pentagon might expect to receive it. The White House staff replied that no such document had been proposed to or signed by the President. Nothing more was ever heard about it. Clifford is certain that his instructions from the President were entirely oral, and rather narrow in scope – how to give General Westmoreland what he said he needed, with acceptable domestic consequences. The spare, emotionless Task Force report of March 7 was faithful to this understanding. The examination of broader alternatives came later and was conducted in different forums. For practical purposes, the Task Force died with the submission of its single report.

A plausible reconstruction of what may actually have happened about the directive is that, following a breakfast meeting on February 28, Rostow drafted something for the President's signature outlining a set of questions for the Task Force that had just been created. He sent a copy to Bundy, probably with a note to the effect that the President would sign the directive within a few hours. For some reason, no copy was sent to Warnke or others in the Pentagon. Bundy, recognizing the workload imposed by the new assignment, got in touch with Warnke's office. Then, for reasons or inadvertencies not yet disclosed, the President never signed the directive. It was thus a piece of paper without official status; its contents were unknown, even unofficially, to most of the Task Force members, and the deliberations and recommendations of that group were not responsive to the questions it posed.

The foregoing multiple discrepancies seem to reveal Lyndon Johnson's profound distaste (instinctive or cultivated) for inconvenient facts, and his desperate need to present himself as a man who was on top of every problem at every moment – ever the wise, calm, philosophical, farseeing, unbiased seeker after objective truth. How else, for example, can one interpret his stunning remark to Walter Cronkite that he regarded Ambassador Goldberg's recommendation for a total bombing halt as "the most important and perhaps the most constructive" proposal of all, after having summarily denounced it on March 16, 1968 in the presence of at least ten people.

Confusions, inconsistencies, and contradictions thus gather like swirling snowflakes in a blizzard, dazzling the eye with their wild exuberance, while serving to obscure the gray and mundane forms of truth. It will take a lot of digging and a lot of time, but who can doubt that in the end, after some distant spring thaw, historians will uncover the bones of actuality and piece them together in a sensible mosaic. One sincerely hopes that their ultimate assessment of Lyndon Johnson will be based upon a broad range of accounts written by third parties who can speak with some authority and who are inclined to tell it like it really was.

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Stanley Kauffmann on films

Zabriskie Point

(M-G-M)

Michelangelo Antonioni, one of the finest artists in film history, has made a mistake. I want to hazard some guesses about why he made it, to investigate the relevance of this mistake to current film and to art generally, all of which seems more important to me than his new film itself, but first some comment on *Zabriskie Point*.

As everyone must know by now, it is set in the United States. Mark, a young radical, meets Daria in the Southern California desert. He is fleeing the Los Angeles police who think that he shot a policeman at a college protest. She, although temperamentally a swinger, is working at the moment as a secretary in Los Angeles and is driving to Phoenix where her boss is having a business conference in his desert home. Mark, who has stolen a plane in L.A., runs out of gas after he has teasingly buzzed Daria's car. She arrives where he has landed and agrees to give him a lift to get more gas. En route they reach Zabriskie Point in Death Valley, the site of ancient lakebeds, now a frozen heaving sea of borates and gypsum. There, after some talk, they make love.

Later that day, he flies back to return the plane in Los Angeles. (When she says it is risky, he says, "I *want* to take risks.") The waiting police kill the presumed cop-killer, who actually is innocent, when he doesn't stop taxiing promptly. Daria hears the news on her car radio. She arrives at her boss's house but very soon leaves. She stops and looks back at the luxurious house, and in her mind she sees it explode, over and over again, its contents floating dreamily in space. Then she drives out of the last shot, leaving us to look at the sun in the west.

The script is the work of the director and Tonino Guerra, who has collaborated on all of Antonioni's best films. Here, instead of the assistance they have sometimes had from other Italian writers, they had the help of the young American playwright, Sam Shepard, the American radical journalist Fred Gardner, and Clare Peploe, an English young lady who was a production assistant on *Blow-up*. The fundamental trouble with the film is the script, and the trouble with the script is that it does indeed seem the collaboration of all these people. *Blow-up* was written by Antonioni and Guerra (one germinal device was taken from a story by Julio Cortázar), and then was put into English by the young English playwright, Edward Bond, but it was essentially an Antonioni-Guerra product. That does not seem to have happened here. The script seems the outcome of a poll, taken among all the collaborators, as to what would represent youthful dissent and revolution in America today. The result seems the assembly of a checklist, accurate enough, but it could be almost anyone's checklist. And the story rests on tenets of revolution which may or may not be valid but which here are rather grossly assumed, not dramatized.

Antonioni's critics have called him a tourist, yet this film does not seem to me even a good tourist's notebook. These are not *his* "notes," they do not have the mark of his personality, as his "notes" about London had in *Blow-up*. What is primarily missing here is not conviction of idea – he may well be convinced about the force of radical youth and the need for their revolution – but confidence as artist. He is like an actor playing a role in a foreign language who has learned his lines phonetically.

In *Blow-up* the result was quite different, even though he knew less English then than he knows now, because the picture was an expression of a life-view that was centrally his. The London photographer was involved in a mystery of existence that also involved Antonioni. There is no equivalent feeling in the new film. Nothing in these two characters resonates anything that we feel to be truly his; and no "montage" of their characters creates a third force that represents him. Constantly, we feel him trying to connect with the film, but it is never his.

Throughout, there seem to be recognitions of the fact that he has not connected, evidenced by his efforts to supply "characteristic" touches, with which he can lay claim to the work. The uncertainty about whether Mark really shot the policeman at the beginning is Antonioni's enforced ambiguity, made mechanically by cutting away; later, Mark tells Daria plainly, "I never got off a shot." The disappearance of Anna in *L'Avventura* was *her* disappearance, not anyone's device. This business of the policeman is a strained effort to lend ambiguity to a bald story. Daria visits a desert hamlet – en route to Phoenix – to see a friend who has brought some underprivileged L.A. children out there for rehabilitation. She never finds her friend, but she does meet the children, who change from little scamps to little demons. But the change seems manufactured, the supposedly haunting air of evil seems to have been blown in by a wind-machine. When Mark and Daria make love at Zabriskie Point, their intercourse is "amplified" by the sudden appearance of groups of other young people making various kinds of love until there is a landscape of passion imposed on the dead terrain; but it is *imposed*. Antonioni has said that the fantasy is in Daria's mind, making love just after having smoked pot, but there is no ground for this in what we see (in contrast to her explosion-fantasy at the end). It seems merely an effort at imaginative extension.

There are genuinely beautiful moments. Not the shots of the desert, well done though they are, because the desert is a subject that a cinematographer like Alfio Contini could hardly fumble. I mean such moments as the shot from a helicopter that spirals down next to the grounded plane in which the dead Mark is lying, surrounded by police cars; it is like the descent to earth of a snared spirit. There is a shot of Daria's boss in his high office, with a huge flag billowing outside his window and another skyscraper beyond it, that goes past satire to a poignant statement of slick, barren "office" civilization. A highway patrolman stops Daria in the desert (he thinks she is alone; Mark is hiding), and after she has made an impertinent reply to a routine question of his, he looks all around the huge solitude slowly, presumably toying with the idea of ravishing this luscious, irritating piece – then gets back in his car. His long pause is one of the few truly implicative moments in the film. When Daria imagines the explosions of her boss's house at the end, the first of those explosions is silent – an excellent touch which adds to the shock and which acts as the necessary bridge into

(Continued on page 28)

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Reed Whittemore: Reforming the Tube

How to Talk Back to Your Television Set by Nicholas Johnson

(Little, Brown; $5.75)

Whatever happens to the Federal Communications Commission, at least some of its dark days will have been brightened by the presence of Nicholas Johnson. He is a staunch liberal Fed, standing firm against the enemy in New York. He stomps his feet and makes the noises of a genuine old-time antitrust reformer. His chief targets are the "ownership patterns" in TV and the communications industry – the big networks getting bigger, the conglomerate corporations getting more conglomerate. And richer. He goes after them hard, but without venom. ITT and the National Association of Broadcasters are villains with wax moustaches; AT&T and the networks look better, but they are too big, and too self-serving to *be* big. And TV itself, in no matter whose hands, is the monster of the age.

A monster indeed. TV is the great mechanical herald of *1984*, replacing education with conditioning, putting a two-dimensional phony-real national presence in our once private parlors, leading us all into thumbsucking. In less than three decades it has done its work, and now urgently needs to be undone. But far from being undone it is extending and consolidating its powers, and being constantly reinforced by new technical breakthroughs, preparing the way for what Johnson calls "instantaneous ubiquitous, no-cost access to all information." Yet Johnson remains an optimist about our capacity to keep control of the monster. He has faith in reason, the independent mind, the democratic process, all those threatened wonders. He calls his book a "manual for practicing pragmatists."

Of course he knows that undoing TV will be hard. The profits in TV are "incredible," and who would undo profits? Also the industry is now so settled in its ways and misconceptions that it regards proposals for change as infringements on its rights (this is a new version of squatter's rights). Thus the industry has frequently charged the mild, ineffectual, industry-favoring FCC with wanting to play censor. Johnson's reply: "I am delighted the networks have raised the issue of censorship in America. I hope they will permit us to discuss it fully." His use of "permit" there is nice. He contends that corporate censorship makes the FCC look like a piker.

What is chiefly censored, he believes, by money TV is variety, diversity. The model is Detroit, with uniformity the only way to successful competition. Prime-time programming is where the big crush is, and where, under present conditions, no deviation from the low competitive norm makes economic sense. He would change the conditions. He would liberate some of the prime time by fiat, requiring for example that each network give an hour each night, on a staggered basis, to "public service programming." With everybody *equally* weakened in the battle for prime-time audience ratings, nobody would be hurt. *He* says. Would anyone at the networks agree?

And he is after bigger game than a few hours of prime time. To achieve diversity he sees the necessity of evolutionary "institutional realignments" that will gradually open the airwaves to all the many sides, interests, needs and talents of his long-suffering heroine, the public. He wants more money for NET, PBC and other public-service programmers. He wants energetic citizen participation in license renewal cases, and "public access" to station time. Worst of all, he wants *standards* established. Standards?

The thought of the establishment of standards strikes the establishment with fear and trembling. Censorship. Tyranny. Who is qualified except the dear Lord above (and management) to establish standards? Johnson replies that doctors, teachers, pilots all have professional standards; and "members of the radio and television industry like to *think* of themselves as members of a profession" (my italics). Also, since the members of the industry are in charge of the 25,000 hours and 350,000 commercials the average 18-year-old has experienced, they have

Teacher Answering Young Radicals

Given the choice of blowing-up the Empire
State Building or a department store, he said balloons
took his breath away, too.

Then he took the wind in his fist
and let it out like a butterfly,
to show what power was.

When no one understood
he let himself go
and they followed the simple flight of his mind

flower to flower. Then he raised his fist
into a hammer and slammed it to the table,
to show what weakness was.

He had them,
and could have lifted them with his voice
to where blood gets thin as air

and honest rage suffocates in the throat.
He told them instead about his fist,
the dull pain up his arm, turning warm.

Stephen Dunn

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social responsibilities at least comparable to those of doctors, teachers, pilots. Why not, then, have standards commensurate with those responsibilities, standards of knowledge, excellence, ethics? At the moment such standards do not exist, and their absence is particularly noticeable at the highest levels of TV where money and programming (and hiring and firing) (and imposing and deleting) converge.

Johnson makes it all sound very reasonable; he is a reasonable man. With his blessings and connivings our citizens will take TV into their own hands and *demand* standards, diversity, public access, all the good things. The citizens, together with the long-awaited Citizens' Commission on Broadcasting (pled for without result since 1947), will provide the power and the energy for appropriate evaluations and reforms; the citizens will put teeth in the FCC and other government regulatory agencies. Thus the evil conditioners will be thwarted; we will stop sucking our thumbs and get back to the individualism, the mental independence that is our heritage and the strength of our democracy.

Yet beyond these pleasing affirmations are a good many basic difficulties that Johnson, wearing his practical reformer's hat, has not found time for. *Can* such lovely reforms take place by the mechanisms of participatory democracy, and without destroying (rather than "realigning") the present institutions? *Can* we expect rational results (i.e., variety, diversity, standards, etc.) as a result of the pressure tactics recommended? *How* does the medium, even under the best of conditions, lend itself to the making of active rather than passive citizens? What the hell *is* "communications" anyway? Or "information" for that matter. (Information is what we will soon have instant free access to all of.) These questions are too abstract and academic to be brought up while combatting station license renewals, but they do lurk in the neighborhood of TV, and they do need to be meditated on, in quiet moments, even by busy pragmatists.

Of particular moment is the question of what greatly expanded public service programming would actually consist of. What would we be apt to find replacing *I Love Lucy*? The Johnson book is fuzzy on the issue, but like many other earnest reformer statements it is, where it shows its hand, very puritanical, especially about entertainment. Entertainment is what the enemy provides; reformed TV would provide something more solid. One can object to the industry's narrow view of entertainment without accepting such a grim alternative – must we always, with our shoes off, have something solid? Also, something solid turns out to be, in instances normally given, stern social science stuff about slums, bad schools and racism. Reformers must be more spacious and relaxed than this about public service programming. Otherwise, despite the evils of slums, bad schools and racism, TV might as well remain in the hands of Camel cigarets.

Johnson himself, though his mind ranges widely, is so missionary about social uplift that he sometimes fails to notice when his missionaryism betrays him. On the one hand he preaches variety, objectivity, disinterestedness, the representing of many views; and on the other he sees TV bringing the *right* social messages, and often. Here is a paragraph displaying both confusion and bias:

> There is a big job to be done by anyone concerned with the role of the media in contemporary America. We must ensure that the image which Americans have of every city accurately reflects the real-life trials and triumphs of life in schools, buses, tenements, public housing projects, and welfare offices. Documentaries and front-page features are not enough – though they are important. As former FCC chairman Rosel H. Hyde has observed: "This is not just another story – another 'issue of public importance.' It is a major crisis . . ." The message which white America needs to hear must be sent out every day – with thirty-second and minute spots (as KSFO has done in San Francisco), with daily reports, and even in commercials, serials and soap operas, and on the fashion, society women's and sports pages.

Can we not distinguish, even in a "major crisis," between the commercials and the program? In that passage Johnson is failing to do so. If public service television also fails to do so, the medium will not be improved. The commercials may be more worthy, but the admen and propagandists will still be in charge – and we'll still be there sucking our thumbs.

Luckily, Johnson doesn't program us so strenuously in most other parts of his solid and sensible book.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

STEPHEN DUNN *is a graduate student in the creative writing program at Syracuse University.*

Correspondence

Economic Policy (Cont.)

Sirs:

May I enter your economic policy debate?

"Pragmatic liberal" economists, who have held dominant influence in the economics profession for the past 30-odd years, have been telling us two things: (1) economic growth equals economic and social welfare, or else is the most direct path toward welfare; and (2) quantitative economic growth generates a surplus (the "growth dividend") to solve our social problems without changes in social and political institutions.

By either or both of these assumptions, the United States should have solved its social ills a long time ago. From 1929 to 1969 America's gross national product grew from $103 billion to $935 billion in current dollars, and by 260 percent in real (price- corrected) terms. Disposable personal income per capita doubled over the same span, in real terms. What more could our "growth" economists ask?

Except that despite this prodigious economic growth – and in important respects *because* of it, as I'm about to argue – our problems are graver than ever. It's hardly necessary to catalog them; I would point out, however, that Arthur Okun's claims of improvements in black ghetto employment rates and in state and local government finances during the 1960s are, to say the least, debatable. Nonwhite *teenage* unemployment, a key social indicator, showed no real progress (27.5 percent jobless in 1961, 25 per-

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The Koerners aren't trying to save the world. Just a little piece of it.

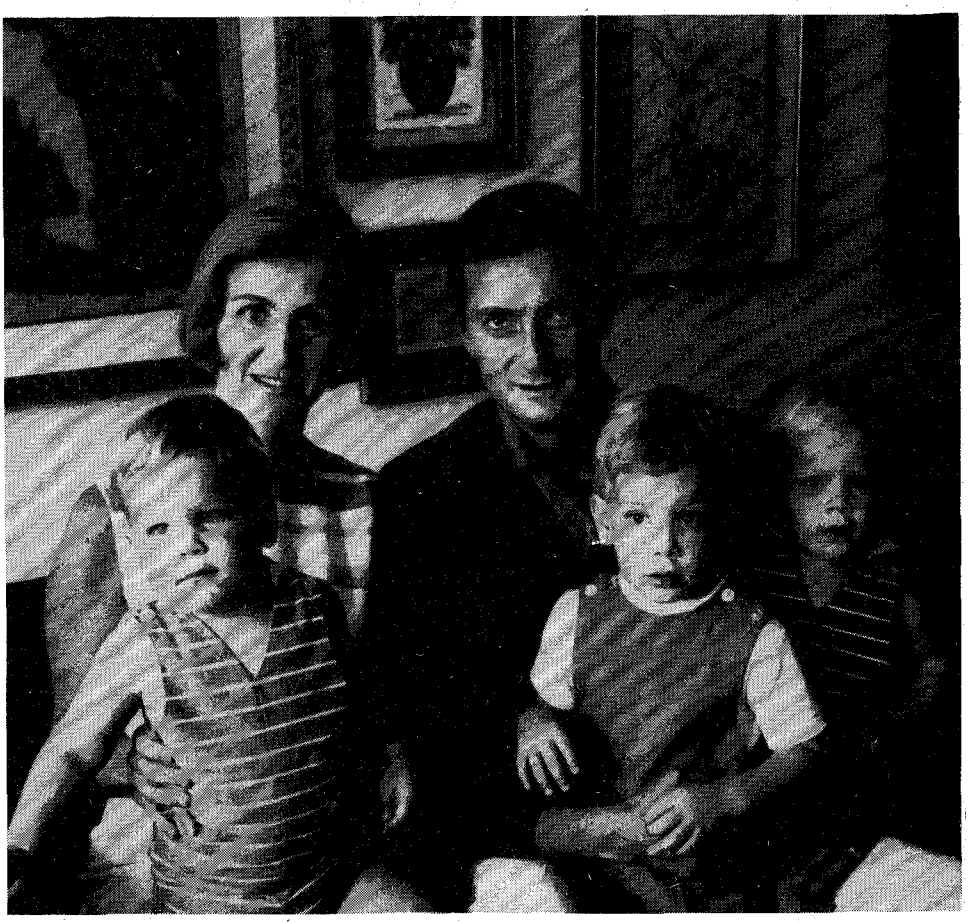
Romero is a small farm village clinging to the mountains of Colombia, South America. Poverty is extreme. Illiteracy is almost total. Electricity, sanitary facilities and running water are nowhere to be seen, and small children haul water from the river three miles away. There is a school in the district, but convincing parents that education should take precedence over water-hauling is a hard argument to win.

The Fuentes are one of the village families. Poor even by Romero's sub-standards. The mud-brick house with dirt floors they live in isn't even theirs. The two-acre farm behind it provides all the income for the family of nine. Most of the time there isn't enough to go around. Yet, this has been a good year for the Fuentes. Their 7-year-old daughter Luz Marina has been able to stay in school.

This miraculous stroke of luck is because of a family living in New York, who are helping Luz Marina. They're the Koerners. Through Save The Children Federation, they are contributing $15.00 a month to help.

For Richard and Marianne Koerner the $15.00 a month is not an extreme sacrifice. Yet, with three robust boys of their own, there are many ways they could use the money. But Richard, whose job involves foreign travel, doesn't have to imagine the poverty the Fuentes endure. He's seen it. He knows, too, that Save The Children can do a remarkable number of things with the money.

First, Luz Marina's immediate school needs are taken care of. Secondly, funds are available to the family to carry out their self-help plan to raise hens. The eggs will help improve the family diet and increase the family income. Finally, a small portion of the Koerner's contribution, together with money from other sponsors, has been lent to the villagers. With their own hands and sweat, they're building a water storage tank and a pipeline. Hopefully, the new water supply will increase the crop yield and the village's income so that some day they will no longer need help.



Self-help. That's what Save The Children Federation is all about. Although contributions are tax-deductible as a charity, the aim is not merely to buy a child a few hot meals, a new coat, or shoes. Instead, your contribution is used to give people the boost they need to start helping themselves.

Sponsors are desperately needed for children in Korea, Vietnam, Latin America, Africa, Greece, the Middle East, as well as Appalachian and American Indian children. You can select the child's nationality and will receive a photo, regular progress reports and a chance to correspond and visit.

Richard Koerner hopes that one day, one of his business trips will enable him to meet the Fuentes. Many sponsors do visit their children, and tell us that it is one of the most gratifying experiences of their lives.

The Koerners know they can't save the world for $15 a month. Just a small corner of it. But, maybe that is the way to save the world. If there are enough people like the Koerners How about you?

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– FRITZ F. HEIMANN, *Commentary*

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cent in 1969); and as for less of a "squeeze on state and local revenues," is Okun serious? If so, let him tell it to Mayors Lindsay, White, Stokes, even Daley, among others.

There is nothing inherent in the American economy to lead us to *expect* purely quantitative economic growth to solve our social irrationalities. These irrationalities are rooted in our political economy – an inseparable fusion of limited economic resources and specific political choices. It follows that even when our GNP reaches double its present $935 billion figure, as it surely will one day, and even when we're spending twice as much as (in Okun's words) "the unprecedented volume of resources . . . on major social programs" as we are now, the social situation may well be *worse* than it is today, not better.

The reason is not only that past a certain stage economic growth creates disproduct faster than rational product (as E. J. Mishan contends in *The Costs of Economic Growth*). It has to do, more fundamentally, with the fact that quantitative economic growth often strengthens those existing political and social forces that are the cause of the malaise in the first place. In our own society, it has added muscle to the most retrogressive institutions, chiefly the major corporations and the "high mass consumption" culture they propagate and feed upon.

The best example of how our political economy operates in practice is the 1961-68 "new economics" boom itself, the showpiece of Walter Heller and Paul Samuelson, who told us in 1960 (as Okun repeats now) that the dilemma we faced then was not the pattern of our politically-directed resource allocation, but simply the "full employment gap" brought about by the "orthodox" economics of the Eisenhower years. So we had our record-shattering eight-year expansion. And what was the result? Certainly not a solution of our social problems, for, as already noted, virtually all of them worsened during the 1960s. Instead it was (in real terms) a 65 percent increase in after-tax corporate profits, against a 10 or 12 percent increase in average weekly earnings of manufacturing and service workers and a 3 percent rise in net farm income. This should have come as no surprise: the key political inputs of the 1961-68 boom were investment credits and jacked-up depreciation allowances for business, regressive tax cuts that reinforced the private consumer market in a big way, the "moondoggle," $160 billion of prime contracts for weapons producers, and other Government welfare goodies for our 100 corporate neediest cases (SST, COMSAT, Job Corps projects for Litton Industries, etc.).

In other words, the 1961-68 economic "growth," together with the politics that powered, directed, and harvested it, strengthened Corporate America (and its Pentagonist substructure) more than any other sector of our political economy. It tightened the stranglehold that private profit-making collectivities had already exercised over our economic, political, and cultural life. Thus, when Okun argues that "the overriding economic priorities lie elsewhere in 1970 precisely *because* economic growth was achieved during the sixties," he's seeing things upside down: on the contrary, our real social choices now appear to be *less* than they were a decade ago, *precisely because of the economic growth experienced during the sixties.*

Richard B. Du Boff
Bryn Mawr College

Molly Maguires

Sirs:

Stanley Kauffmann (Feb. 21) concludes that Paramount's "Molly Maguires" is not good theatre. It's not good history either.

The Molly Maguire hangings of 20 Irish Catholic miners, in the wake of the tragic "Long Strike" of 1875, by juries which systematically excluded Catholics, was Pennsylvania's and the nation's largest mass execution. Mr. Kauffmann's reference to only 10 hanged miners undoubtedly refers to the 10 miners hanged on one day, June 21, 1877. Paramount distorts the magnitude of this offense by hanging only 3 miners who have committed several acts of violence. Yet, none of the 20 hanged miners was ever apprehended in an act of violence. The evidence against them was principally supplied by the Pinkerton informer James McParlan.

Paramount missed a significant opportunity for public education by failing to note, even in a postscript, that Clarence Darrow later exposed McParlan turning perjured evidence against Big Bill Haywood and the

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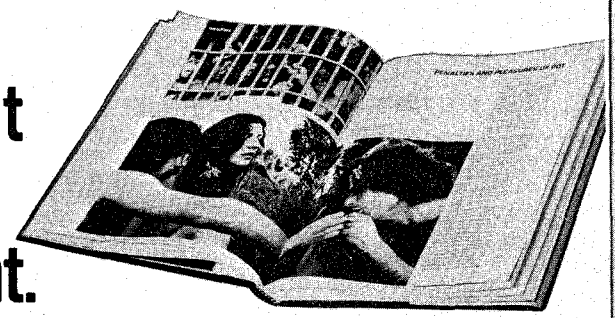
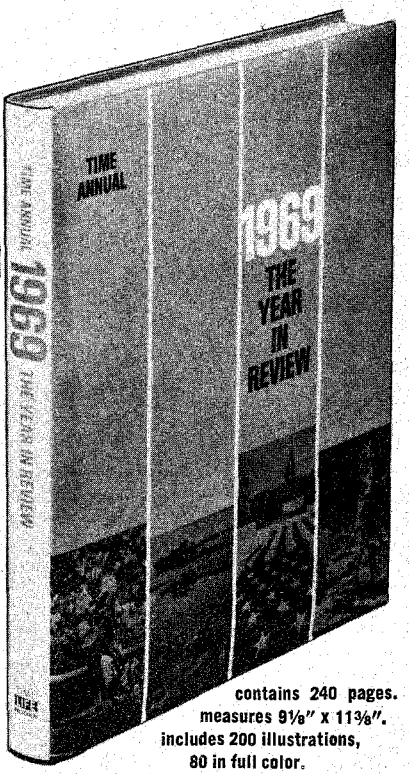
1969 THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Portnoy wasn't the only one with a complaint.





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Students demonstrated against the war. The "silent majority" finally found its voice and protested the protesters. Others found fault with the flamboyant nudity of "Oh! Calcutta!" And just about everybody got angry about the pollution of our environment. At year's end, the protests were bringing about big changes. In a fascinating mix of color photography, reportage and bylined articles produced especially for this new book, the Editors of TIME-LIFE BOOKS review this year of protest—and change—in

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People.
Carlo Ponti, Jr., Sophia Loren's greatest achievement. Thor Heyerdahl and his papyrus boat, "Ra." Norman Mailer, a candidate. Comeback for Mae West. Nation mourns passing of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Everett M. Dirksen.

Environment.
The peril of DDT recognized. New threat of thermal pollution. Polluted air corroding Venice's priceless marbles. The Santa Barbara oil slick. Reprieve for two national heirlooms: the Everglades and the Mineral King Valley. Profiles of conservation leaders.

Culture.
A season of shock in the theater. Naked abandon of "Oh! Calcutta!". Movies, also sexier than ever. "I Am Curious (Yellow)" opens to big lines. The metamorphosis of the Western. On television, the Smothers Brothers smothered. Chuck Berry and Fats Domino now popular again. B. B. King, indeed "king" of old blues; Janis Joplin, queen of new blues. Photographer Raymundo de Larrain's portfolio of fashions from the flea market. TIME Associate Editor Gurney Breckenfeld on inflation. The Alaska oil rush. Nader's "raiders." The food franchising boom

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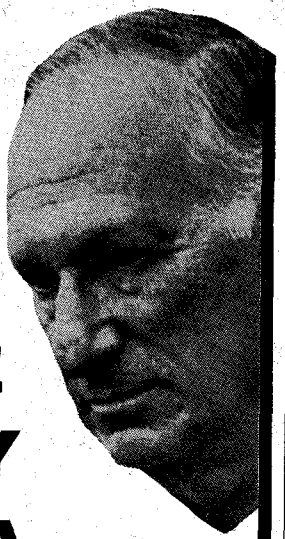

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Western Federation of Miners in the famous *Steunenberg* case.

Paramount's mindless portrayal of John Kehoe is especially offensive. As the Schuylkill County AOH Delegate and elected high constable of Girardville, Kehoe represented an ascending Irish political and labor power which had to be crushed by the Establishment. Ironically, Kehoe bested the Reading Coal Company's candidate Judge Cyrus Pershing in Pennsylvania's close 1875 gubernatorial race. Pershing was transplanted by Gowen from Western Pennsylvania to the coalfields bench after an undistinguished legislative tenure which saw him voting against the Emancipation Proclamation; against the 13th Amendment; and against allowing Negroes to settle in Pennsylvania. Kehoe's sister-in-law and brother-in-law were killed during a midnight raid by vigilantes who were identified, but never prosecuted. Pershing pronounced Kehoe's death sentence in 1878 for a crime committed in 1862 with no witnesses after the Parole Board deadlocked 2-2.

The miners' trials failed to comport with elemental due process. Defense witnesses were systematically blacklisted, evicted, cut off at the company store and several were imprisoned. With President Gowen of the Reading, as special prosecutor, and General Albright attired in full military regalia, the trials would smack of opera bouffe if 20 men had not died.

Dartmouth Professor Broehl's definitive *Molly Maguires*, published by the Harvard Press in 1966, suggests that no Molly Maguire organization existed, and documents the Reading's expenditure of $4 million to break the union.

Lamentably caught between lace-curtain aspirations, and the English Archbishop Wood of Philadelphia, whose name suggests the ambit of his social sensitivity, the Church abandoned the "shanty" Irish miners to the rabid Establishment press, courts, politics, and coal and iron police in one of the most tragic episodes in American labor history. The sheer magnitude of the Molly Maguire hangings – 20 men dead and the labor movement stymied for a generation until the "Great Strike" of 1902 – demands that the Molly Maguire story be told with candor and dignity, and not sold by Paramount's superficial sensationalism.

John M. Elliott
Philadelphia, Pa.

Sirs:

Stanley Kauffmann's review of "The Mollie Maguires" makes some thoughtful observations about a film, which despite its factual shortcomings, is still one of the few to have touched upon the largely untold story of resistance and rebellion in American history. His critical comments on the portrayal of James McParlan indicate that he feels the real life McParlan, as a human being, must have demonstrated some qualities which would have made him other than a "block of stuff, a unit in an equation, not a man." An examination of the real McParlan's career suggests otherwise.

McParlan's mentor, Franklin B. Gowen, "the King of the Reading Valley," was the mine owner, railroad tycoon and political power of a century ago who bought and paid for the Pinkertons and labor spies. The knowledge that he initiated the atmosphere that sent 19 "Mollies" to the gallows caused his own suicide in a lonely hotel room a few years later.

No such guilt troubled McParlan, the professional stoolpigeon and fink who carried his craft into the mining towns of Idaho and Colorado thirty years after the Mollies were crushed; he destroyed much of the effectiveness of the Western Federation of Miners and almost succeeded in hanging its leader, William D. Haywood, as the prosecution's top finger man. A biographer of the Wobblies, Clancey Sigel, wrote that his miner father always instructed him in the qualities of redemption in every man, and to consider carefully the social circumstances surrounding Judas' action, "but that a man like McParlan was simply outside the human pale . . . that his was a case of almost pure evil."

If violence is apple pie American, then another great tradition is that everybody scorns a fink and an informer, who must be without human qualities to be effective. Certainly an equation or stuff, but not a man.

Russell W. Gibbons
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Timber

Sirs:

The article "Timber!" by Howard Rogers in the Feb. 7th issue reveals

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the incredibly parochial perspective with which the advocates of the Timber Supply Act (HR 12025, S 1832) support their position. Rogers argues that the bill will establish a network of roads throughout the National Forests so that valuable dead timber can be salvaged, that thereby lumber mills can be kept open, and that in turn, timber prices can be held at a reasonable level. Despite the fact that he tosses a questionable bone to the conservationist by adding that these lumber roads will also make the "roadless" wilderness areas accessible, his narrow-minded economic justification for high intensity harvesting of the public domain should make long-ranged planners and conservationists alike gulp in disbelief.

In implying that the timber industry will be harvesting only dead and dying trees, Rogers distorts the entire thrust of a bill in which the Secretary of Agriculture is explicitly instructed to practice "immediately" "optimum yield" forestry practices. In neglecting to mention the effect of such accelerated harvesting on the Multiple-use principle guiding our National Forests, Rogers closes his eyes to the many other functions intended for this public land. In suggesting that the salvage of dead and damaged timber will significantly change the price of lumber for any length of time, Rogers grossly simplifies the pricing mechanisms of the industry itself and incidentally shows no understanding about the development of the forest humus essential for future timber growth. In failing to mention the ecological effects of clear-cutting and intensive harvesting, in failing to ask why the 65 million acres of industry-owned timber land is not better prepared to serve our needs, in failing to explain why in a once bounteous continent we now must nibble away at our remaining forests, Rogers demonstrates that he has totally misunderstood the message of today's conservationist – a message which he labels "conservatism."

We live on a limited planet, Mr. Rogers, and our economic, our spiritual and our biological demands must be mutually compatible. If we don't bring these needs into a far better balance than exhibited now by the world's most advanced society, the job will be done for us by the forces at large which are far greater than our's!

Frederick B. Churchill
Indiana University

Co-opted?

Sirs:

John Osborne's opinions of Nixon and his Administration have bothered me since his reports during the campaign of 1968. He overdoes himself in attempts to say something good about the President and his advisers on every occasion. In the February 7 issue he has gone too far.

"The purpose" is not "all that is seriously wrong" with the Mitchell substitute for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Osborne is right about the issues he mentions, but the significant difference is the elimination in the Mitchell Bill of the provision which empowers the Justice Department to register voters in the counties of seven Southern states where there is a high proportion of black citizens and a low proportion of blacks registered to vote. It is not an unreasonable provision; since 1965 some counties have "purged" themselves by registering a sufficient number of black voters so that they are no longer subject to federal registration under the Voting Rights Act. Many observers credit this provision alone with the increase of 250,000 registered black voters since 1965. The elimination of this provision in the Mitchell Bill is what "is seriously wrong." It is a calculated attempt to pacify a racist clientele and to avoid embarrassment to the Administration by their neglect of the provision if it is provided. The Administration is insisting on a return to judicial litigation, a laborious and frustrating process at best, which, incidentally, deprives Southern blacks of what has been one of their most potent political weapons.

Get John Osborne away from the White House. He is already co-opted by it.

Robert B. Albritton
Evanston, Ill.

In reply:

Mr. Albritton is mistaken in his statement that the Administration substitute for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 eliminates the authority to send voting examiners (federal registrars) into counties where voting rights are denied. The provision of the 1965 act that confines this authority to certain counties of seven states is eliminated, but the authority itself is retained, nationwide, subject only to the arbi-

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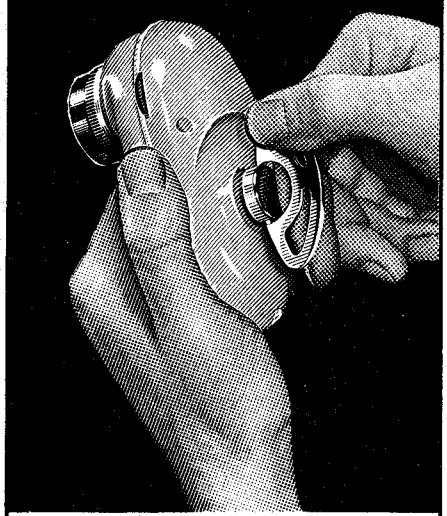

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trary judgment of the Attorney General that such action is necessary and not, as in the present law, conditioned upon the past proportions of eligible to registered voters. I share the writer's doubts of the Administration's good faith in this matter, and said so in the piece to which he objects. But I also share the judgment of the Ripon Society, hardly biased in this Administration's favor and certainly not "co-opted" by the Nixon White House, that "The Attorney General's bill, taken by itself, is simply not as bad as its critics have charged." (*Ripon Forum* – January, 1970.)

John Osborne

Kauffmann, *from page 20*

her fantasy. And the shots of things floating slowly – materials, not people, because the enemy is things – are nicely sardonic.

But scenes that are supposed to be more directly sardonic, more sharply critical of materialism, business conferences, TV real-estate commercials with mannequins that live All-American lives, are so blatant that they boomerang. They do not expose the hollowness of the culture but the insecurity of the artist who wants to expose the culture. His disgust is superficial, and his means of expressing it are trite. Compare these business sequences with the stock exchange sequences in *Eclipse*, which I saw again recently and which grows in stature. Those hectic stock-trading scenes are distillations of the culture in which they occur, not self-limited, not cartoons but the essence of power and sex drives as they pass through a revealing flame, grotesque ballets danced against impotence. We see humanity revealed there by the dehumanizing process itself. But the business scenes in *Zabriskie Point* seem the work of a sophomore who has never been near such a meeting; they have no touch of the human reality that makes their banality and their pompously disguised greed so terrible.

Antonioni's insecurity extends to his selection of the two leading performers. He has chosen two unknowns, two non-actors, Daria Halprin and Mark Frechette, neither of whom grows during our two-hour acquaintance. The dialogue assigned them is both sparse and generally tinny, and neither of them has the personality, let alone the

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talent, to fill out the gaps of silence or the flatness of locution. Antonioni has done some bad casting in his career – for instance, Richard Harris in *Red Desert*, Betsy Blair in *Il Grido*; but this is the first time he has used completely inexperienced people in leading roles. Here it is not so much that he has cast badly, it is more that he seems to have lost faith in the processes of art, has relied on the fact of youth to supply the truth of youth. This use of non-actors, as the best of neorealism has shown, can sometimes work, but hardly when the director is a stranger in a strange land, literally and figuratively.

From the choice of Death Valley as a symbol of American civilization, to the inclusion of gag-signs on barroom walls, to the shots of garish billboards, this film sticks to the surface, stranded.

How did it happen? When an artist of Antonioni's magnitude makes a mistake like this, more must be done than merely to note it. *Zabriskie Point* is not just lesser than his best work, as *Blow-up* is lesser than *L'Avventura*; it is hardly recognizable as his work, or as a development from it. Those of us who have loved his art cannot help wondering what happened.

Writing about *Blow-up* three years ago, I surmised that the defects of that (far superior) film were attributable to the fact that Antonioni was a stranger in London, and I expressed concern that this highly societal artist had just announced plans to make his next film in another strange society, the United States. But even in London he was more at ease than in America. Britain is still Europe, whatever the British say, and if Antonioni was in a foreign country (where in fact he had worked before, to make a part of *I Vinti*), it was one with some affinities for any European and some direct cultural connections. ("Linking our England to his Italy," said Browning.) In England, Antonioni was able to translate Antonioni into English. There is no such translation in *Zabriskie Point*, even though he is here trying to speak like an American, trying to comment from within. I know that he has denied this intent, that he has claimed only to be an observer, but the film stands apart and contradicts him: it purports to be speaking knowledgeably from the center of American social turmoil. If it were intended as an outsider's observations, why would he have needed the assistance of Fred Gardner, why would he have needed more from Sam Shep-

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ard than translation? (Shepard has said that he put in the scene with the children "and some other scenes.")

What impelled Antonioni to this "impersonation"? It is a commonplace that the most difficult part of an artist's life these days is not to achieve good works or recognition but to have a career: to live a *life* in art, all through one's life. Since the beginning of the Romantic Era and the rise of subjectivism, the use of synthesis in art – of selecting from both observation and direct experience, then imaginatively rearranging the results – has declined among serious artists, until by now art has taken on some aspects of talented diary-keeping. (The most obvious examples are "confessional" poetry and "action" painting.) An artist's life and internal experience have become more and more circumscribedly his subject matter, and his willingness to stay within them has become almost a touchstone of his validity. This has led to the familiar phenomenon of the quick depletion of resources – all those interesting first and second works, and the sad, straggling works that follow them. The question is further complicated because the more sensitive a man is, the more affected he is in our time by the Great Boyg, the presence of the monster, which increases his sense of helplessness, of inability to deal with such experience as he does have.

But he must work, because for him working and living are congruent. He is (in this case) in his mid-fifties, in supreme technical command of his medium. At the moment, let us say, he feels drained of inner resources. This feeling of attrition is emphasized by contrast with some people around him who are not drained and who, artists or not, have vitality and address. They are the radical, dissident young of the world. They make him envious. Not so much to be young again, or to be as virile as he was at twenty-one – those envies apply to anyone. He is mainly envious of their surety and moral energy. He is experienced enough in politics to doubt salvation through politics; he is acute enough morally to see the dubiousness of youthful moral absolutism; nevertheless, he is envious of their *beings*. And, possibly, he tells himself that what he needs is to shift from a generally pessimistic view – which has been the fundamental view of most serious artists in the last century and a half – to a participatory and expectant view, at least as a motor device. His first move is to *Blow-up*, in which the protagonist and the ambience are young but the center of which is mature, a view down the perspective of some years. With *Zabriskie Point*, the exponents *and* the center are intended to be young.

Helping to expedite this shift is the special relation between this artist's medium – film – and the young. There is no art that excites them as much, no art that seems to belong more surely to them and their era. A lot of young people's attitudes and assumptions are culturally questionable – and potentially harmful to film itself – but, incontrovertibly, those attitudes exist. So the temptation for a film director, of all artists, to take youth not only as subject but as creed is stronger than it might be for a novelist or a dramatist.

Another contributing factor follows from this: Antonioni's success and the pressures that attend film success. The problem here is not in declining to do compromised work, although I'm reliably informed that a few years ago Antonioni refused a million dollars to direct someone else's script. The problem is that he is *wanted*, that the production money which most directors find difficult to get is his almost for the asking. This is a strong drug for any director, particularly for a man who spent many years starving and scratching and hacking and begging, in order to get the chance to work as he pleased. At last he has power, and he is pressed to use that power by people who now want "product" from him. Here are some possible consequences: he works before he is ready to, and he spends more money than he needs to. And perhaps by an unconscious chain of association, he proceeds to the place from which the money stems, as the source of both empowerment and conflict; and, to display fidelity to his principles, he makes a picture attacking the system that produced the money with which he is making the attack.

Political action has not been a real concern of Antonioni's films since *Il Grido*. (The strikers in *Red Desert*, the

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antibomb marchers in *Blow-up*, were only elements of the environment.) For a man of his philosophical temperament – I say this carefully – politics seemed to have become increasingly superficial, at least as a subject in art. Now his use of the rhetoric of revolution seems an escape, an emollient for a fever of frustration, a way of *seeming* to come face to face with root troubles in men, something that only the best political philosophers can do through politics and for which political activists can't afford the subtlety, even when they have it at their disposal.

With at least some glimmer of the need for political change in our society, I still suggest that, for Antonioni, the political gesture of this film may not be much more than a kind of personal therapy. It may be an attempt to exorcise a guilt for having been politically quiescent in his recent work, just as the whole film may be an attempt to exorcise a guilt about being middle-aged. Assuming that these guilts exist, I suggest that the first one is irrelevant in an artist of his depth, and the second is a kind of senility-in-reverse, a contradiction of his own genuine and appropriate vigor.

All the above, I think, are matters that may have contributed to the mistake of Antonioni's new film. What will happen now? I hope he returns to Italy, to work. Besides the obvious fact of the familiar language, there is the para-language, the things that need not be said between people who understand each other easily; and he will also understand *societal* language again. I need not repeat how beautifully I think he has used that language in his Italian films. And again he will have the chance to be alone, to reside within himself, something that is very difficult for a man in a foreign country, who usually feels isolated and ignorant unless he is continually trying to join.

Youth may continue to interest him. Why shouldn't it? But if he sees it through his own eyes, out of the core of his own society, he will have more to say to all of us, including Americans, than by trying to be a surrogate American youth. How badly we need the best of Antonioni. On past evidence, all he needs to do is to be Antonioni again, unafraid of his doubts and his solitude. In the career of this superlative artist, *Zabriskie Point* can only be the occasion for gravest concern and affectionate hope.

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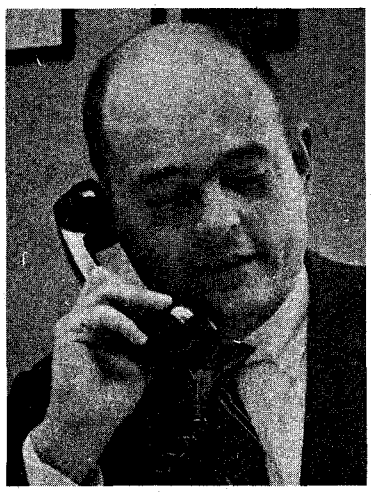

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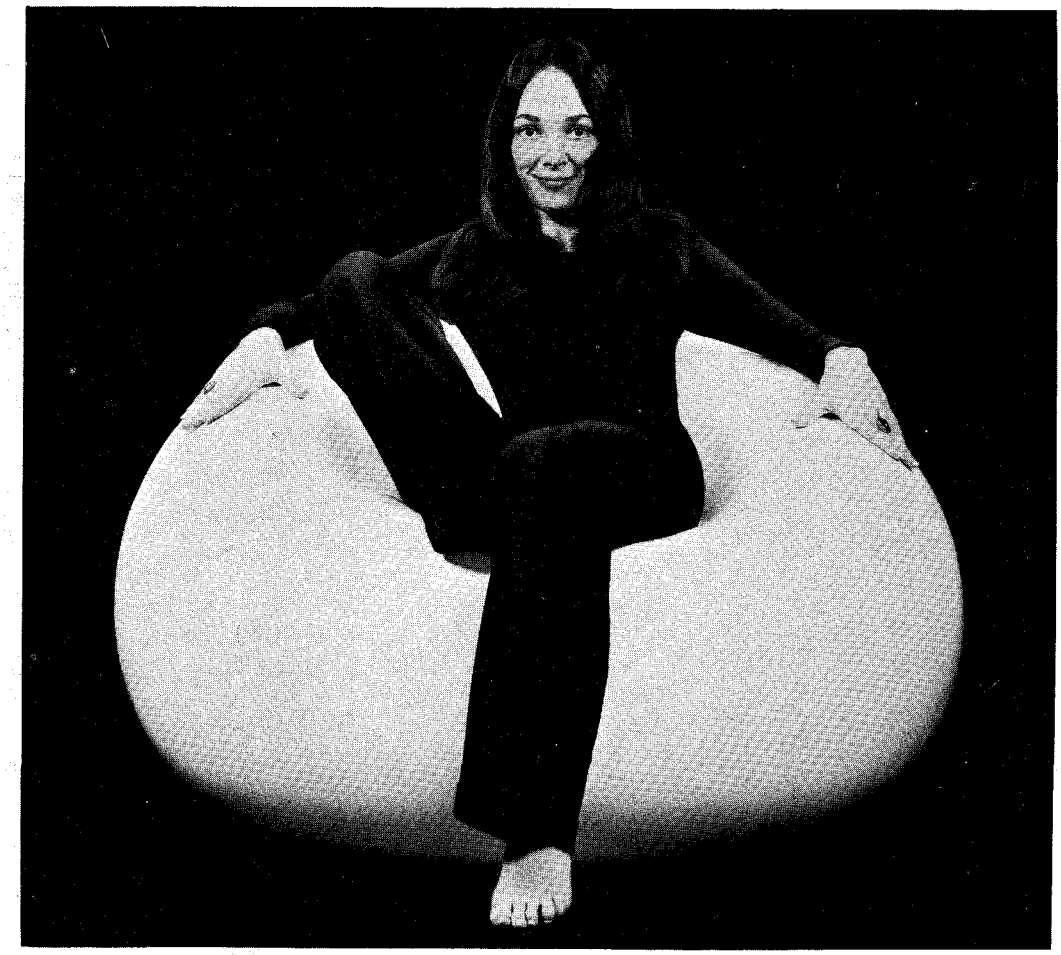

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